

I would like to start my first letter by saying that it is an honor to serve as the 70th Commandant of Cadets at the United States Military Academy. It is both humbling and exciting to help train, develop, and teach our country's national treasure—her very own sons and daughters—to become the next generation of Army leaders.

It is also an honor to follow in the steps of MG Mike Scaparrotti, a tremendous officer and leader. Mike and his wife Cindy have done a magnificent job these past two years, and evidence of their devotion and commitment to the Long Gray Line is everywhere. You may not know, but Mike was duly promoted to major general the day he relinquished command as Commandant and has reported to Central Command to work for General Abizaid as his Director of Operations, J-3. We all owe Mike and Cindy a great debt for their service. Their influence will be felt in our Army for the next 30-plus years.

Writing this column at the mid-point of the cadet summer training, I'd like to share some observations and then describe some general principles which will help guide my time here.

First, you cannot help but be immensely proud of the young men and women of today's Corps of Cadets. Our new plebes in the Class of 2010 are as talented and, in many ways, smarter and more physical than previous classes. It is heartening to know that America's brightest remain attracted to service to their country through West Point. The Classes of 2007 and 2008 constitute the cadre and chain of command for Cadet Basic Training (CBT) and Cadet Field Training (CFT) and are competent,

committed, and eager to learn. The summer has not only been a great experience transitioning the plebe class into cadets and Soldiers, but it has been a very effective time for developing the leadership skills and styles of the upper classes. It was great to see their maturity develop and progress each and every day.

Second, it is important to stop and reflect who these young men and women represent. Each of them volunteered to enter West Point and serve while their country is at war, knowing full well they will graduate while their country remains at war. The majority were sophomores and freshman in high school when our country was attacked. They immediately understood the implications of this war and the threat to our freedoms and our way of life. And yet, contrary to the vast majority of their peers, they have elected to personally do something about it. No one can question their duty ethic, even at such a young age. They already have internalized it, and "they get it."

History will gloriously record the service and contributions of this "9/11 Generation" of the Long Gray Line. These young men and women already have demonstrated a similar devotion to duty, honor, and country as the "Greatest Generation," and it is an honor to serve with them and prepare them for such a time as this.

If the average American would look to see what is right with America, they would find it embodied in the values, ethics, and traditions of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Through this embodiment, we contribute to the faith, trust, and confidence that America has in our military—which is critically essential as we continue to fight this

"Long War." As such, I feel there is nothing more important as Commandant of Cadets than to maintain these values, pure and untarnished, and to inculcate them into this next generation of leaders. We would want them to assume ownership of "Duty, Honor, and Country" on R Day, but our mission is to get them there well before they pin on their lieutenant's bars on graduation day.

Our objective remains the same—to graduate these leaders of character for a career of service in the Army. In so doing, these leaders are agile and adaptive warriors who demonstrate unquestionable ethical and moral behavior, act selflessly as servants of the nation, and possess an unwavering commitment to the profession of arms. These are the 21st Century leaders that our country needs and that our Soldiers deserve, in the most trying times in both peace and war.

Finally, to our graduates—I welcome your ideas, thoughts, and dialogue. Whether you graduated one year or seventy-five years ago, your words and your actions still represent our Academy. You are role models, and our cadets look to you as an example. So, thank you for supporting our cadets and our Academy, and in doing so, supporting our nation. Please visit your alma mater whenever you have an opportunity. It has changed significantly since you were here, but you will be heartened both by what has changed and what endures.

GO ARMY!



*"History will gloriously record the service and contributions of this '9/11 Generation' of the Long Gray Line."
BG Caslen '75, administering the cadet oath to the Class of 2010 on 26 June 2006. Photo by Ted Spiegel*

